

What was imperialism, and what effects did it have?

I. Europe in 1850

- industrializing
 - Great Britain and France = leaders
 - Germany beginning to industrialize
 - textile industries, esp. cotton
 - coal mines
 - railroads
 - British manufacturing output growing
 - access to cotton, coal, colonies
- nation-states
 - Great Britain and France = “super powers”
 - Germany not yet a nation-state
 - growing working class
 - universal male suffrage
 - access of working class to the vote, to party politics, to socialist party politics
- nationalism
 - recognized as necessary for a strong nation-state
 - techniques of nationalism appearing in Europe
 - flags, national holidays, etc.
 - aimed at acquiring the loyalty/support of the working class

II. Imperialism

- imperialist project will unite European industrial power with the imagined community of the nation-state and its nationalist ideology

Today's lecture:

- how did imperialism look from the perspective of Europeans?
 - what is/was imperialism?
 - what made it possible?
 - how did Europeans justify imperialism?
 - how did Europeans understand the rest of the world in the mid-19th century?

Later lectures:

- how did imperialism look in China, in India, in Africa, in Latin America, in Japan, etc.?

How to define imperialism?

1. *The goal and result of imperialism was the creation of colonies politically submissive and economically profitable to their European metropolises.* From Daniel R. Headrick, The Tools of Empire, p. 11

Imperialism: system and pursuit of empire; process of accumulation and acquisition of land, resources, labor and profits

[will explore this definition in part 1]

2. *The enterprise of empire depends upon the idea of having an empire.* From Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism.

Imperialism, although a process of accumulation and acquisition of land, resources, labor, and profit, is supported by an ideology (a way of thinking; a philosophy) that suggests that certain peoples and certain territories require domination, assistance, “civilization.”

Profit and hopes of further profit was the overwhelming goal of empire. Behind this goal, however, was the belief – and the justification – that distant lands and their peoples should be subjugated, and that the empire had the duty to rule “less advanced” peoples (“less-advanced” being defined by European standards: industrialization, the nation-state, etc.)

[will explore this definition in part 2]

Part One

The creation of empires is not a Western invention. Overseas conquest was nothing new. Emperors and empires were old news. China had empires; African states had empires; Aztec empire; Incan empire.

What is a European invention is the type of empire-creation that occurred in the 19th century. What was different was modern European imperialism, a.k.a. high imperialism to distinguish it from all efforts at overseas conquest before the late 19th century.

Something different happened when industrialized European powers sailed around the world in the 19th century, encountering new peoples. High imperialism was larger in scale than earlier efforts at conquest. Characterized by an enormous disparity in power between colonizers and colonized, due to industrialization.

What is going to make European high imperialism possible?

- Technology: steam ships, rapid-firing rifles, machine guns, railroads, telegraph cables

Desire to create colonies, desire to grab a bigger piece of the global market – these are not new desires among 19th-c. Europeans.

- Spanish in Latin America
- Portuguese in the Indian Ocean
- Britain and France in North America, the Caribbean, India

What is going to make this desire a reality, what is going to allow Europeans to achieve their desires is their industrial power.

- and not the industrial power of textiles. One doesn't create an empire with manufactured clothing.
- One creates an empire with military technology, communications technology, transportation technology

What made imperialism necessary/possible?

Causes of imperialism:

- search for new markets for European manufactured goods: overproduction and under consumption → new markets, new consumers
- search for raw materials for European industry: oil, cotton, rubber, tin, copper, gold
- search for cheap and profitable labor, e.g. Indian laborers growing cotton and opium
- search for cheap and profitable land
- search for goods demanded by a mass consumption market: coffee, chocolate, tea, bananas, oranges
- how to get these things? Colonies

- Imperialism was an effort to create politically submissive and economically profitable colonies – see Headrick’s definition
 - remember the benefits of colonies in N. America for Great Britain
 - _____ in India for Great Britain
 - _____ in the Caribbean for Britain and France
 - _____ in Latin America for Spain and Portugal

Colonies are designed to help/assist/support the mother country:

- provide cheap raw materials
- provide cheap labor
- provide cheap land.
- provide open markets
 - remember the enormous amount of textile cloth exported from Britain to its colony India
 - example of Gandhi protesting the British by encouraging Indians to weave their own cloth and make their own clothes

What allowed Europeans to create politically submissive and economically profitable colonies?

Key point: Industrial Revolution empowered Europeans in a way they hadn’t been empowered before; industrialization and technology changed the very nature of imperialism.

Technology made imperialism more efficient; it made acquiring colonies more efficient:

- steamships meant that 2-month long voyages could now be made in 2 weeks
- new armaments made European military conquest easier
- new medicines made European conquest easier

Technology is power: over the natural world and over people. Those who wield technology wield power.

One example (more examples to follow in forthcoming lectures): **guns!!!**

Firearms Revolution of the mid-19th century:

- 1800: European guns were muzzle-loading smoothbore muskets
 - loaded the bullet through the gun; added gunpowder
 - range of 80 feet
 - took 1 minute to load – thus, staggered lines of firepower
 - firing record of 7 out of every 10 times
 - performed poorly in rain or damp (gunpowder would get wet)
 - thus, the bayonet that could be attached
 - smooth bullets – erratic path
 - puffs of smoke – easily detectable
 - difficult to fire lying down
- developments:
 - rifling: spiral grooves inside the barrel; made the bullet spin in a predictable way
 - breech loading (rather than muzzle-loading)
 - new bullets → brass cartridges
 - percussion lock: meant that a gun could fire in any weather
 - smokeless powder
 - use of steel – made production cheaper in mass amounts (perfect for armies)
- 1884: Maxim Gun
 - shot 11 bullets per second
 - half-mile range
 - precision
 - can be used lying down
 - could be used in any weather
 - no smoke – undetectable

These technological changes, important by themselves, were even more significant when the production of armaments was harnessed to industrial power. Not only is the technology better, but the technology can be quickly, efficiently produced in mass quantities, as the result of industrialization.

These are guns that could not be copied/reproduced by arms manufacturers in non-industrial states. Gap appears by the mid-19th century between what Europeans have at their disposal in terms of armaments and what non-Europeans have.

Imperialism will entail the flooding of Asian, African, Middle Eastern markets with European manufactured goods

This flooding of markets will, however, be preceded, with European military technology.

Textiles will follow guns.

Part Two

How did Europeans explain and/or justify imperialism?

1. Military and commercial needs

- Jules Ferry

2. Diplomatic competition between European powers, fueled by nationalism; Great Power status required colonies,

- quote from Treitschke
 - note “barbarian lands”
 - “virile people”
 - natural to establish colonies
 - lack of colonies → lack of virility; no one will take you seriously

3. Social imperialism: attempt to use imperial expansion to diminish domestic discontent

- industrialization → working-class discontent → unionization, strikes, socialism
- imperialism as an ideological strategy: diffuse working-class discontent; the state’s glory = the worker’s glory
- empire as an opportunity for unemployed people
- empire as a means of improving the conditions of the European working class by providing economic benefits

4. Civilizing mission (*mission civilisatrice*)

- civilized nations have the duty to spread civilization to uncivilized peoples
- “civilization” defined by Europeans: the nation-state, industrialization, certain types of culture, certain types of homes/gardens, certain types of education (e.g. science)

- Europeans believed themselves to be the bearers of human rights, law and justice, Reason, education, technology and industry, enlightenment, etc.
- first stanza of “The White Man’s Burden”

What is the white man’s burden?
 Why is it the white man’s burden?
 How does Kipling describe this burden?
 What are the consequences?
 How are non-Europeans described?
 How does Kipling describe the relationship between the colonizing ruler
 and the colonized subject?
 Is this an optimistic poem? How does it describe the imperial project?

Once engaged in an imperialist project, how did Europe depict the rest of the world in the mid-19th century?

- An ABC for Baby Patriot
 - Depiction of non-Europeans?
 - Depiction of Europeans (in this case, the British)?
 - Attitude toward Empire?
 - Significance of the fact that this is a child’s book?
- picture of the British guy being taken care of by Indians
 - significance of this photo?
 - note the statement by the viceroy of India: “We are all British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race.”
 - example of the attitude enshrined in the term “civilizing mission”
- significance of these two documents? What is important, or noteworthy, about them?

What are some of the effects of imperialism and European technology?

1. Imperialism → spread of European political and economic domination throughout the globe

1800: Western powers held 35% of the earth's surface

1878: 67% of the earth's surface

1914: 85% of the earth's surface

Britain gained 66 million new subjects between 1880-1900

France, 26 million new subjects

Germany, 13 million new subjects

2. Economic effects for colonial areas: non-European states evolved into producers of one or two primary products aimed at export to the mother country, and into markets for European manufactured goods

- e.g. India, which went from producing the most cost-efficient manufactured textile fabric, to producing raw cotton for British textile factories

3. Diplomatic crises between European nations: competition between European nations outside Europe often led to diplomatic crises and sometimes war

- arms race between European powers before 1914

4. Race-thinking

- concept of race is not new in the 19th century
- idea that some people were inherently superior and others inherently inferior was not new
- race-thinking strengthened among Europeans in the 19th century
- “race” is used as a catch-all term for any type of human difference: historic, linguistic, religious, cultural, etc.
 - Anglo-Saxon race vs. Celtic race vs. Germanic race
- concept of “race” and of superior vs. inferior races used all the time by Europeans; way of thinking/speaking that was strengthened by imperialism
 - Earl of Cromer: progress and enlightenment of Egypt could only have been accomplished by the Anglo-Saxon **race**, which was an enlightened, adaptable, and humanitarian **race**. Without the aid of the Anglo-Saxon **race** Egypt would still be corrupt, ignorant, prejudiced, self-interested, medieval.

- race-thinking among Europeans would be reinforced by science/pseudo-science
 - phrenology/craniology – the science of head measurement
 - eugenics – the “science” of creating a better human race through selective breeding
 - IQ testing
 - physiognomy – “science” of determining personal characteristics from the appearance of the face

Key point: all these “sciences” could be used to prove that Europeans were superior, and thus justified in attempting to dominate – economically, politically, technologically – the rest of the globe.

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“High” imperialism:

- creating empires is not new; not a European invention
- what is new is the type of empire-creation that occurred in the 19th century
- characterized by an enormous disparity in power
- disparity due to European industrialization and technology

What made imperialism necessary/possible?

- search for new markets for European manufactured goods: overproduction and under consumption → new markets, new consumers
 - search for raw materials for European industry: oil, cotton, rubber, tin, copper, gold
 - search for cheap and profitable labor, e.g. Indian laborers growing cotton and poppies
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4. Civilizing mission (*mission civilisatrice*)
 - “civilized” nations have the duty to spread “civilization” to “uncivilized” peoples
 - how is “civilization” defined?
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